

Testimony of Pamela Puchalski
of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health
Before the Children Committee
Public Hearing March 5, 2013

In support of RB 6526 An act concerning toxics disclosure and innovation for healthy children

Senator Bartolomeo,, Representative Urban and honorable members of the Children Committee, my name is Pamela Puchalski. I am the Project Coordinator of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health and I am testifying in support of RB 6526 An act concerning toxics disclosure and innovation for healthy children.

Rapid industrialization since World War II and the subsequent creation of over 80,000 chemicals used especially in the manufacturing of children's products and consumer products in general have fostered a disregard for the health of workers and their families. CT has been banning toxic substances like lead, cadmium and BPA one chemical at a time, but it is time to establish a more sustainable, comprehensive, and proactive policy around chemical policy reform. A great place to start is with chemicals which have been identified to be of high concern to children which is why I support RB 6526 An act concerning toxics disclosure and innovation for healthy children.

As workers and as consumers we are all exposed to substances over periods of time which are causing us harm in ways that have been identified in chronic health issues such as various cancers, asthma, learning disabilities, hormonal and neurodegenerative disorders. While many chemicals may not be hazardous or persist in our bodies or the environment, others can persist in the environment, or accumulate in the food chain. Others can harm human health in small amounts, while others can cause life-threatening disease after exposure. Exposure can occur during the manufacturing process, during product use or after the product breaks down chemically allowing the small particles to exist in the environment. The result is contamination of food and water, house dust, and the home environment in general. Obviously although all human beings can thus be exposed to toxic chemicals thru inhalation of contaminated air and dust, ingestion of contaminated food and water, dermal contact, or during pregnancy, children experience exposure to toxic chemicals at a higher percentage than most adults except for the workers who may be actually working with a variety of chemicals

Workers who regularly come in contact with dangerous substances also receive a higher dose than the general public and often bear a disproportionate share of the adverse impact of products made with toxic chemicals and metals. Workers in Connecticut who have been harmed by toxic chemicals include retirees at a manufacturing plant who went blind within a few years

of retiring because of a degreasing product used in the final stages of the manufacturing process and studies are still ongoing as to the cause of a high number of brain cancer cases at another major manufacturing firm. One study states that a conservative estimate of at least 50,000 – 60,000 deaths per year can be attributed to occupational toxic chemical exposures and other occupational illnesses (Leigh, et al, 2000; NIOSH, Steenland, et al, 2003

By identifying those chemicals of high concern to children in a process as defined in the language of RB 6526, Connecticut will be beginning a process which will not only reduce exposure to toxic chemicals but which will ultimately reduce health care costs in Connecticut. As one looks at data which demonstrates increasing rates of childhood cancers and cancers in general, as well as increasing rates of asthma, autism, reproductive disorders and sees the higher body burden from exposure as experienced by children it is obvious to see that our focus must be on the children of today who will ultimately be the workers and consumers of tomorrow.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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